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ABSTRACT

Although the realities of higher education accurately match the aims of early educators, there are limits to our ability to measure the learning that occurs in colleges and universities. As higher education has been made available to a greater quantity of participants, the demand for accountability has increased. Accountability concerns vary for different participants in the educational process. Faculty are concerned with salaries and facilitation of learning; students are concerned with access to courses and the costs of tuition; and trustees are inundated with information and care about balancing the different areas for which universities are responsible. A great deal of study has been commissioned by legislatures and state governors, often focusing on the competency testing of beginning teachers. However, educational reform should concentrate on strengthening all parts of the classroom-teacher milieu. Three areas of impact for the future of education include: (1) using student testing to assist learning; (2) reducing cultural and sex bias in testing and educational participation; and (3) improving the interpretation of data. (GDC)

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Higher Learning in America: Aims and Realities

W. Ann Reynolds
Chancellor, The California State University

My undergraduate degree is a B.S. in Education, with majors in Biology and Chemistry and a minor in Theatre from Kansas State Teachers College, Emporia. The most *useful* (not the most inspiring nor challenging nor fun) course I took in college was tests and measurement, and later, in graduate school at Iowa, the same was true for biostatistics. Then, from 1974 through 1982, I served on the biology group for the Graduate Record Exam. They are meager but cherished credentials in testing which have served me well. Could it be that testing has the same aesthetics as Shaker furniture in that its beauty lies in its simple functionality? Please know I still yearn nostalgically for that isolated period of time I spent at Princeton each year with Bill Kastrinos and Gertrude Sanders and colleagues in biology, diligently slugging our way through new and old questions. I also miss the Canada geese on the lawn and the superb pie. The only thing I do not miss is the highway between the Newark airport and Princeton when it iced.

We have entered an era when many see testing as the answer to every problem—from AIDS to drug abuse to poor writing skills. Many of our state political leaders, and indeed the general public, place complete faith in testing. As a practicing test maker and teacher, I believe there are both considerable strengths and some limitations to the "quick fix" implied by testing.

No group is more aware of the *limits* of testing than you who are professional psychometrists and deal with testing issues on a daily basis. While in many ways the testing mania opens opportunities to develop further our expertise in the subtle, complex tasks of measuring human skills and knowledge, I urge that we be honest about the constraints on our abilities. This is especially true in measuring the learning that occurs in colleges and universities.

Before I pursue this theme further, I want to remind you how accurately the realities of higher education today match the aims of its early leaders

and sponsors. The nation has just helped to celebrate the 350th anniversary of its first university, Harvard. Its founders and those of other pioneer colleges, urged by religious leaders, established colleges in which ministers, teachers, and lawyers could be educated. In the next century this concern with education for the professions spread to provide an education for persons in technical and applied fields. In 1862, the federal government awarded land grants to states, providing them the funds to establish universities to teach agricultural and mechanical knowledge. Since then, states have increasingly used their own resources to provide education at public expense to their residents.

As the need for better-educated teachers in the early twentieth century became more apparent, states established colleges for teachers. The mission of all of these colleges has now been expanded so that a more comprehensive curriculum is offered, preparing students in a wider range of fields. As a result of this expansion the number of persons annually receiving a college education has expanded from the 12 in Harvard's first graduating class to about 1 million today in over 2,000 four-year colleges and universities. Ours is the first nation in the world to aspire to entitlement to a college degree essentially for all young people who qualify and desire to pursue the goal.

Recent studies comparing the United States' educational record with that of other countries have reflected ill on the United States with respect to the educational excellence of our schools. In contrast, the picture of the level of participation in higher education is actually quite bright. In 1980-81 some 32 percent of Americans 25 years and over had attained at least some college education. The closest international competitors were Canada and East Germany with 17 percent, and Japan and Sweden with 15 percent, respectively. By our estimate, today some 23.8 million people in the United States have a baccalaureate degree.

We have also tried with vigor over the last 25 years to increase the participation of women and minority students. The number of women and minorities attending college increased 85 percent between 1970 and 1983. In 1970, 3.5 million women were in college; in 1983 there were nearly 6.5 million. The number of persons attending part-time increased 88 percent and the number of students 25 years and older increased from 2.4 million to 5.1 million.

Happily for all of us in "the life," the projected decline in higher education enrollment during the 1980s simply has not materialized. Ten years ago, national conferences were devoted to planning for survival despite steady decreases in college enrollment. In the California State

University (CSU), with a 2.2 percent enrollment increase last year (8,600) and another 2 percent this year, we are scratching our heads about how to get more classrooms. Clearly we are witnessing an increase in the college-going rate.

Over the last two decades, public policy has demanded that, like elementary and secondary education, higher education be made available to persons regardless of their ability to pay. In 1963-64, financial aid to students in postsecondary education totalled about half a billion dollars. By 1981-82, it was more than $18 billion, about 80 percent from federal funds. The growth of student aid ended in the early 1980s, and now we face growing student indebtedness and an erosion of our ability to provide educational access to all who qualify.

Having met quantitative goals in providing more access and participation, higher education is now being asked to show that it has also met qualitative goals. In his impressions of democracy early in American history, Alexis de Toqueville asked if the leveling tendencies of broad participation in such social institutions as education and public life might not threaten their quality. Let us examine the relation of quantity and quality.

First, higher education has always been, in the eyes of many, the province of the elite—principally those who by the gift of social and economic status were aware of its value and could afford to pay for it—and of the intellectually elite—those who by virtue of native intelligence and a traditional educational experience could demonstrate eligibility for it. As opportunity is extended to large numbers of our population, many now say it cannot *really* be higher education. Too many seem convinced that improved access can only mean lower standards for higher education.

Second, the public and its political leaders are deeply concerned about our nation's economy and our increasing loss in competitive advantage. Many reports, making invidious comparisons between the educational performance of students and the vigor of the economy in the U.S. and, for instance, Japan, point to an inferior American educational system as the cause. And in an attempt to reverse this economic down spiral, the public appears once again to be willing to invest more heavily in higher education. But they count on that investment to yield a quickly visible economic return and regaining of total dominance in world trade—a heavy responsibility for higher education alone to achieve!

Third, the increasing use of accountability measures in kindergarten through twelfth grade has led the public and policy makers to think that

extension of use of such measures to college and university education might serve a useful purpose. The public indeed seems to fear that the "rising tide of mediocrity" that was said to threaten the public schools may also be lapping at the shores of our university campuses.

Let's take a moment to consider the concerns about accountability from the perspective of the persons most directly involved. You might call this the view from the lifeboat.

Faculty — Just as in real estate where the three most important considerations are location, location, location, the three most important issues for faculty, justifiably so, are salary, salary, salary. Running a close and urgent second is the issue of faculty development. Faculty need more time for scholarly pursuits, for travel (an ever-popular challenge to defend), for course planning and the honing of teaching and research skills.

Most faculty are truly eager to find ways to facilitate more learning in their classrooms. At the same time, they are mindful of academic freedom and their historical academic role in determining curricula and course content. Sometimes it is the little things. When I taught full-time, I was severely tried by the brimming chalk trays, containing pieces of chalk the size of a transistor. I still have my own personal box of colored chalk sequestered in my desk drawer as a talisman. And then there's parking. . . . .

Students — Students rightfully expect access to courses needed for a degree in the semesters or quarters that fit their plans. Our campuses are too profligate with student time as we line them up at bookstores, to see counselors, for degree checks. Their personal indebtedness has grown alarmingly. Nationwide, student borrowing increased from $2.3 billion in 1977-78 to an estimated $10.5 billion in 1985-86. It is not unusual for a CSU student to graduate with a $10,000 debt. (According to a recent survey of financial aid offices, the average indebtedness for students enrolled at a four-year public institution at the end of four years is $6,685. And at private institutions, the figure is $8,950. This rising indebtedness may also have channeled more college students into business or engineering careers than perhaps truly want to be there. In the CSU, for example, 16,500 undergraduate degrees (or 37 percent of the bachelor's degrees awarded) were conferred upon students who majored in these two popular areas. And then there's parking. . . . .

Trustees — Trustees feel inundated with information in contrast to the concern they might miss something that's going on for which they are

responsible. (At this very moment in the CSU with 19,000 faculty, 335,000 students and 9,000 support staff, I can assure you that somewhere somebody is doing something that is illegal, injudicious, harmful to well-being, or even all three of the above at once.) The vast majority of trustees yearn lovingly over the institutions they oversee. They come to agonize over the balances achieved between building and renovation needs, the salary benefit package for employees and liability insurance. Caring about an institution as they do, it is hard for them to see how fiduciary and policy responsibilities are translated into real growth in institutional quality plus student achievement.

Legislatures and Governors—In recent years education has been "in," but in a complicated, patchwork way. Nearly a hundred major studies (it is now "in" for educators to paper their guest powder rooms in draft copies of "A Nation at Risk" or "Who Will Teach Our Children?" rather than with wine bottle labels) have evolved, targeting one or more parts of the educational enterprise for reform. There is more coherence in their ontogeny than their output. Nearly every study starts with an organization that provides the topic or focus and finds fiscal support, usually from a private foundation or from federal or state government. A commission is appointed, chaired by the most famous person who will agree to take the job, and serving on it are a governor, a state or federal legislator, a college president, a dean, a faculty member, an emeritus distinguished educator, and then, always, Al Shanker. (I've now served on three national commissions with Al Shanker, attended most of the sessions, the reports are completed, and I've yet to meet him!) The target of all these studies has been policy makers, and usually those who control educational support dollars, hence mostly state legislators and governors.

The net effect has been spotty. Some 30 states now have implemented a stronger high school curriculum either as a graduation requirement or as a prerequisite for college, but much of this process antedates the reports. SAT and ACT scores have reversed their downward slide, banked, and show signs of slowly starting to climb again.

The urge to form a commission has found fertile ground in the subject of credentialing of teachers. We've just had a good example of the good and bad effects such a commission can have in California.

With half a million dollars from a private foundation, sponsorship by the chairs of two legislative committees on education and State Superintendent Bill Honig, as well as the blessing of other higher education leaders, a California Commission on the Teaching Profession was formed

over two and one-half years ago. The Commission labored long and hard with excellent staff support from Stanford University. Last December they produced a report proposing sweeping reforms to improve the teaching profession. The 27 recommended reforms had a price tag of some $1.7 billion. The report was lauded by organizations representing teachers, administrators, school board members, and legislators.

Then, the legislative session in January began with two major bills introduced to implement many of the 27 recommendations. These included reducing class size, lengthening the time to tenure for teachers, requiring publication of indices of conditions of teaching and learning in each school in the state, and a teacher credentialing process that introduced testing for beginning teachers and a critically important residency year.

Both bills began to undergo extensive hearings and amendments. Lobbyists hovered as in the landing pattern at La Guardia on a Friday evening. I'll bet you can guess what was the only pithy item left in that bill. You're right—testing for beginning teachers and they were to pay for it.

All the other far-reaching provisions for improving the teaching profession and making schools more accountable finally sifted down to establishing more hurdles for the yet unborn—prospective teachers. They were the only ones without an organization formed to oppose the reform bill. All the effort to think comprehensively about the problems of the teaching profession was lost in a last minute drive to get *something* passed that looked like educational reform.

A reform package of $1.7 billion had become a zero cost item—basically because the state had no money left for major reform. Genuine reform and sound recommendations were sacrificed to reality. The only voices in opposition to this focus on prospective teachers as a substitute for comprehensive reform of a vast network of professionals in complex environments with a clear need for additional state funding were those from higher education.

Interestingly, the good common sense of legislators ultimately prevailed. They saw that what had begun with the very best of intentions and the highest of motives had been reduced to a quick-fix solution that didn't gore anyone's ox—except fledgling teachers in a state that needs 90,000 of them in the next decade.

We now face the same challenge during this next legislative session. I am heartened that there is evidence of committment to comprehensive reform—at least before the session begins. I offer you the same opportu-

nity as those in the audience of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* as there still is suspense as to the ending.

I do not wish to leave you with the impression that CSU is opposed to the assessment of teachers. Our plea is simply that universities be held responsible for assessing the competence of their students in the subjects they are to teach. We support a multifaceted assessment of teachers once they have enjoyed a solid residency and had the opportunity to develop their skills in teaching the subject at the grade-levels chosen—an approach consistent with proposals from the recent Carnegie Commission report.

I realize that our position flies in the face of the decision in many states based on the honest belief that a teacher test will create better teachers. My point is that a test *alone* cannot achieve this goal. In reform we need to be honest about all parts of the classroom-teacher milieu and work to strengthen each part. Class size, adequate nutrition for pupils, parental involvement, good texts and teaching materials are all a part of the picture. The teacher-in-preparation needs to develop interpersonal and presentational skills; the teacher must love working with young people, and needs training in psychology, behavior, that aforementioned course in tests and measurement, as well as good mastery of the subject to be taught. I am afraid we are now concentrating on testing only subject mastery as a panacea for all that concerns us in the classroom.

I share my worries on the teacher testing issue with you because I believe that you can and will provide good future solutions in this and other arenas where testing is looked to as a salvation. Let me broaden the glow from the crystal ball I see in three major areas of impact for education in the near future.

1. In my humble view, the issue of using testing actually to assist learning is the "hottest" and most important concept out there in higher education today—the buzz words are "value-added;" "assessing outcomes." You in this audience now have the capability to devise and to assist faculty in developing the appropriate instruments for this endeavor. Faculty, students, administrators are coming enthusiastically together in the pursuit of improving both teaching and learning. We're a little abashed in California for being slow to follow the prophet-in-our-midst, Sandy Astin, and get going. It's embarrassing but good for California to be out-trended by Tennessee, Missouri, New Jersey, Florida, and more. On October 15, we held a systemwide conference to kick-off our planning for systemwide efforts in student outcomes assessment.

We have, however, had for many years a large assessment-based program that has been successful. Students pursuing a degree in the Nursing Program of the Consortium of the California State University have the option of earning academic credit through non-traditional course work, through assessment or a combination of both. Students selecting the assessment option may utilize a variety of standardized examinations, including CLEP, DANTES, and ACT's PEP examinations. They may also utilize standardized exams developed by the University of the State of New York Regents External Degree in Nursing. In addition to taking written tests, nursing students may also take clinical performance tests involving either a role-playing client or a video format. While it is possible to complete the entire nursing curriculum by assessment, most students combine the instruction and assessment options to complete their degree requirements.

2. My colleagues and I look to you imploringly for help on the issue of cultural bias in testing. While I commend those of you who have and are working to eliminate the more obvious instances of cultural bias in standardized tests, I have the feeling that we have just scratched the surface in understanding the broader implications of cultural differences. It is incumbent on all of us engaged in disciplines that may lend further insights into the ramifications of cultural differences to assign high priority to developing a better grasp of these cultural dimensions. Although we have yet to discover the reasons, I am deeply concerned that the high failure rates of Hispanics and Blacks on tests in those 38 states that now test teachers threaten to diminish minority representation in the teacher force. Actually, we desperately need the opposite trend to provide good role models for our minority young people.

It is an interesting and challenging problem, and only you can solve it. I was fascinated to read recently in *Science* that the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)—it and I are about the same age—is now undergoing restandardization. "Normal" in that test was derived from a small sample of White, rural depression-era Minnesotans. (Does that make anyone abnormal who's not a fan of *Prairie Home Companion* and Garrison Keillor?)

It is a tribute, however, to the skill of McKinley and Hathaway, the fathers of the test, that it has been so enduring and so useful on a worldwide basis. The MMPI attests to the constancy of human personality and similar kinds of psychopathology, cutting across cultural lines.

Various indices such as the National Assessment of Educational Pro-

gress have provided generally accurate portrayals of levels of achievement in our public schools. One aspect of such test results disturbs me deeply and that is the consistently poorer performance of females in mathematics as compared to that of their male counterparts. The difference is far too great and has severe negative consequences for women, who now make up over one-half of students in higher education. Until this situation is remedied, women will not be represented as they should in the sciences, medicine, engineering, and even business. You have brought the problem to our attention; now we must collectively address it.

3. In my years as a bench scientist, the part I enjoyed most was "coming to grips with the data." All of you in this room have shared this experience. You sit with printouts and data books and reference charts and reprints, and if you're lucky, figure out what the results really mean. For me, that used to mean calculating how much calcitonin a fetal monkey released in response to a calcium stimulus. Now it means studying college-going rates and predicting baccalaureate productivity.

As a recent example, in the past we have always listed ethnic composition of our student body on a percentage basis. On that basis, Blacks dropped from 7.4 percent of CSU freshmen in 1981 to 6.7 percent in 1985—a dismal showing. However, in reality, in that same period of time, if counted in absolute numbers, the Black high school age population decreased 5 percent and Black CSU freshmen increased by 1 percent—an actual increase if you will in Black participation rates with the CSU. In California, the cohort of 18-year-old Asian Americans and Hispanics is growing, while White and Black populations drop. Thus, percentages mean little by themselves unless compared to absolute numbers.

Minority Enrollment Trends: California 1981-85

	HS-Age Population	HS Graduates	CSU Freshmen
Asian Americans	up 19%	up 47%	up 83%
Blacks	down 5%	down 8%	up 1%
Hispanics	up 1%	up 8%	up 31%
Whites	down 13%	down 15%	up 5%
TOTAL	down 7%	down 7%	up 12%

I urge you to use all of the considerable creative and analytic abilities you possess to come to grips with your data. I am convinced you can provide fresh insights, valid projections, early trends and even warnings

that will benefit higher education. This process is also well-described by a caption at the Yakima Nation Museum concerning the crane:

> "The Crane stands immobile—but when he strikes he always comes up with a fish in his bill. The lesson is—patience should be followed by decisive action."

We need to study our data with patience and care but then act strongly on where they lead us.

> Father Guido Sarducci on "Saturday Night Live" recently described the "five-minute university." He points out that a few years after college, the graduate can tell all he or she remembers of classroom learning in five minutes. There is the five-second Economics 101 which is "supply and demand." Or how about the one-minute law degree based on "possession is nine-tenths of the law."

Please don't let us linger in the public's mind as the "five-minute university." In reality, we're depending on you to help us validate all that we're about, which is that much learning truly has occurred on our campuses.